

Integrating Substance Use, Mental Health, and Primary Care Services In Our Communities: Integration from the Ground Up
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The Twelfth Annual Statewide Conference Integrating Substance Use, Mental Health, and Primary Care Services in Our Communities: Integration from the Ground Up, was held at the Hilton Universal City on October 28-29, 2015, focusing on meeting community needs in providing safe, effective, well-coordinated services that address clients' unique needs, values and cultures. The packed conference accommodated almost 1000 attendees from California, several other states and a few foreign countries.

Attendees participated in plenary sessions and individual workshops. Conference participants had the opportunity to participate in both didactic and experiential workshop sessions that recognize the importance of addressing specific population needs and of system transformation.

LACDMH Medical Director, Rod Shaner, M.D., welcomed the attendees on the first day, along with Wesley Ford, MA, MPH, LA County Department of Public Health (DPH). Dr. Alex Lee with LA County Department of Health Care Services spoke during the morning plenary session. The White House Office of National Drug Policy spoke next about reforming the response to substance abuse: drug policy for the 21st century. A recognition award was made to Walter Ling, MD, Founding Director of the UCLA Integrated Substance Abuse Programs.

Marvin Southard, D.S.W., LACDMH Director, was honored on the second day by leaders in co-occurring disorders, who recalled Dr. Southard's notable assets, such as his ability to remain calm, his integrity, being a mentor, his strategic thinking and his willingness to



embrace diversity. Al Senella, CEO Tarzana Treatment Center, remarked that Dr. Southard is “a bureaucrat that actually gets it.” Tom Freeze, Director of Training for UCLA Integrated Substance Abuse Programs and conference organizer, noted that the LACDMH leader has made a “tireless effort to connect people to the right services at the right time.” He summed up Dr. Southard’s effect with this comment: “You have changed the world!”

Co-sponsors included: LA County Department of Public Health’s Substance Abuse Prevention and Control (SAPC) and the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH). Our associate producers of the conference include: UCLA Integrated Substance Abuse Programs, The Pacific Southwest Addiction Technology Transfer Center, California Institute for Behavioral Health Solutions, California Primary Care Association (CPCA), the California Mental Health Services Authority (Cal MHSA) and the Integrated Care Conference Planning Committee.

Those suffering from dual disorders are among the most disadvantaged and disempowered, with complicated needs that traditional ways of siloed treatment could not address. Since the first conference eleven years ago, a committed collection of individuals have planned and produced successful conferences dedicated to the delivery of comprehensive and integrated care for those suffering from co-morbid health and mental health conditions, seeking to merge science and service, and highlight best practices for delivering competent, sensitive, evidence based care for these high-need consumers. Focus has been on the transformation of systems to improve client care, highlighting the collaboration among our diverse systems, including mental health, alcohol and drug treatment, primary care/health, criminal justice, education, and child welfare.

Conference objectives included:

- Facilitate attendees' ability to coordinate services to improve healthcare integration and collaboration for mental health, primary care and substance use disorder services.
- Identify best practices for treating complex needs of those with comorbidities.
- Identify characteristics of services and providers that best support health, wellness and recovery.
- Provide skills that can be immediately implemented

The 2015 Statewide Conference was, again, a 'green event.' All planning and execution efforts were done with mindfulness toward our environment and resource sustainability. Conference planning, marketing, publicity, invitations and registration were created with this standard at the forefront. Attendees and Speakers were strongly encouraged to utilize electronic media for viewing hand-outs and materials.